The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives news accounts and editorial interpretations of matters affecting labor according to the industrial, legislative, and political fields, and contains other information of benefit to the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

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WHOLE NO. 1699 — WILLIAM GREEN, President — WASHINGTON, D. C., TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1943 — GEORGE MEANY, Secretary-Treasurer — VOL. 33, NO. 44

WE PLEDGE—
1 BILLION DOLLARS
IN
WAR SAVINGS BONDS
FOR VICTORY

FACING *the* FACTS

With PHILIP PEARL

The worst labor crisis of the war is now at hand. Sensational headlines on the coal miners' and the railway workers' wage disputes make that evident. But these large groups of workers aren't the only ones affected. Unrest is prevalent among workers all down the line.

If the Government is disturbed about this situation, as it is and should be, it has only itself to blame. We don't like to refer to the Government as "it," but if we get more personal what we say is bound to be interpreted politically and what we have to say just now connotes with politics whatever. It is just a question of dollars and cents and how far they can be stretched. It's no longer a question of bread and butter—it's just bread.

The newspaper headlines don't tell the real story and the newspaper editorials merely obscure the facts. We intend to relate the facts, before the events leading up to what may be a tragedy.

The story begins immediately after Pearl Harbor when organized labor gave the nation its no-strike pledge. The President called a national conference of public, labor and industry representatives to make that pledge official and to decide upon an agency which could settle any and all disputes peaceably without interrupting production.

The Voluntary Way Worked

As a result of this conference, the National War Labor Board was established. It was set up as a tri-partite body, with an equal number of public, labor and industry representatives. It was empowered by Executive Order to function as an independent agency of the Government. It was directed to judge each case on the merits and its decisions were to be final.

Labor voluntarily agreed to go along on this basis because it was democratic and because it promised a just determination of any and all disputes that may arise. Labor unions agreed not to strike for any cause but to submit their disputes to the Board for decision.

A year passed—an eventful year during which the machinery of the Board was tested and found adequate. Then the impact of inflation, with sharp rises in the cost of living, began to oppress the workers. Demands for wage adjustments flooded the Board. The workers were not trying to profit from the war. They merely sought to restore a just relationship between wages and prices.

The Board, after considering the facts, established the "Little Steel" formula. It declared prices had increased 15 per cent between Jan. 1, 1941 and May, 1942. It agreed to increase wages to a similar extent. When strict application of this formula would not be sufficient to render justice, it provided several "outs" for further adjustments.

Labor did not relish this measure, this new-fangled idea of Government regulation of wages, but it agreed to take it in order to help prevent inflation and to further the war effort.

The Errors of Compulsion

But the "Little Steel" formula did not stop inflation and in October, 1942 Congress passed the Economic Stabilization Act designed to stabilize wages and prices at the levels prevailing on Sept. 15, 1942. Former Supreme Court Justice Byrnes was named Economic Stabilization Director.

The new setup was another bitter pill for labor to swallow because no provision was made for adjusting wages to make up for increased living costs between May and September, 1942 and because labor had lost confidence in the desire or ability of OPA to hold prices down. But again labor went along.

Last Spring it became evident that the cost of living was running out of bounds. At the same time Byrnes stripped the WLB of power to make any wage adjustments beyond the "Little Steel" formula limitations of 15 per cent. When labor protested it was promised that prices would be "rolled back." We are still waiting for that promise to be made good.

Finally, the coal miners' wage dispute began to assume critical proportions. Word was passed "confidentially" to AFL representatives on the WLB that sacrifices should be made in wage cases involving AFL workers—in the interest of the war and peace—but that they should not establish a backlog of precedents with which to "stop the coal miners." This the AFL refused indignantly to consent to.

And now the truth is that the WLB no longer operates as an independent agency. Several of its public members are directed how to decide cases by Byrnes and his successor Fred Vinson. Since they hold the balance of power on the Board, it can no longer be said that the WLB judges each case on the merits.

Such dictation is not consonant with democracy. It is in direct violation of the basic agreement originally made with labor. Together with the Government's failure to "hold the line" on prices, it is responsible for the nation's present labor crisis.

Job Insurance Rights Neglected In Some States, Altmeyer Warns

Louisville, Ky.—Arthur J. Altmeyer, Chairman of the Social Security Board, warned here that some States, because of the war situation, are neglecting the rights of unemployed workers to insurance compensation due them under the law.

Speaking before the Interstate Conference of Unemployment Insurance Administrators, Mr. Altmeyer lashed out at experience rating as one of the chief reasons for "hasty lack of sound trends in disqualifications" of workers for benefits they should receive. He said:

"It is important to recognize that under pressures of experience rating there has been a shift from the effectively expressed purpose of unemployment compensation to pay benefits to workers who are unemployed through fault of their own to paying benefits only when the employer is at fault."

Mr. Altmeyer then cited a number of specific cases showing how this approach frequently works out to the disadvantage of workers who are denied deserved unemployment benefits especially those under various State laws which make it well-nigh impossible for workers who quit voluntarily, even though for good reasons, to be eligible for compensation.

"At the present time, when jobs are plentiful, this matter does not cause much public concern," Mr. Altmeyer continued. "But in a post-war period the chief reasons for 'lack of suitable work and may again be faced with the danger of starvation some of the precedents that are now being built up will return to haunt us.

"There is evidence that too commonly the rights which the unemployed workers have to benefits are considered to be claims against an employer rather than against the State. The result of this concept is that conflicts regarding the payment of benefits are considered to be between the worker and his employer, with the State Administrator a bystander."

AFL Workers Backing Up War Relief; May Top 20-Million-Dollar Goal

New York City.—First field reports on the nation-wide, $20,000,000 AFL drive for war relief, now being conducted by the Labor League for Human Rights, promise record-breaking success for this campaign in support of the National War Fund, according to Abraham Bluestein, executive director of the League.

The regional directors of the drive report the cooperation of scores of labor bodies, international and local unions, and individual union members. Thousands of trade unionists are working as volunteers, going into factories and homes to get the pledge of a pay from their fellow AFL members.

Stories from the field emphasize the interest shown by AFL members in labor's own war relief program, which is one of the projects of the National War Fund. In addition to its relief work in all the countries of the United Nations, the National War Fund makes special allocations for organized labor's independent relief programs in Britain, China and Russia. These allocations support such projects as the building of merchant seamen's clubs in Britain and of hostels for workers in China's industrial cities—projects which were initiated by organized labor before the United States entered the World War, and will provide for enlarged relief programs in those countries during the coming year.

Commenting on the progress of the campaign, George Meany, secretary-treasurer of the AFL and honorary secretary of the Labor League for Human Rights, said:

"It is easy to understand the enthusiastic response of members of the AFL to this campaign of the Labor League for Human Rights. Each member knows that the contribution made through the League to the National War Fund goes to him, too, that realistically—here at home, abroad in all the countries of the United Nations—it will help the men of the world our armed forces. They realize that war relief, support of community war chests and the organized USO which serves the armed forces, are all part of our war effort, and that whether they realize, too, that each contribution is an investment in the kind of future for which the war is being fought."

Seabees Give Credit to AFL

AWARD OF MERIT

CONSTRUCTION BATTALIONS, U. S. NAVY

THIS CERTIFICATE IS AWARDED TO AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PATRIOTIC CONTRIBUTION TO THE WAR EFFORT IN OBTAINING THE ENLISTMENT OF RECRUITS FOR SERVICE IN THE CONSTRUCTION BATTALIONS OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY

BEN MORRELL
Rear Admiral, Civil Engineer Corps, U. S. Navy
Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks
Navy Department, Washington, D. C.

Above is a special certificate issued by the Construction Battalions of the United States Navy to the American Federation of Labor for its aid in enlisting Seabees, who have done important work in the war zones.

Green Insists Congress Acknowledge U. S. Responsibility For World Peace

Washington, D. C.—President William Green of the American Federation of Labor called upon Congress to adopt a formal statement acknowledging America's share of responsibility for maintaining world peace and declaring America's willingness to participate in the development of agencies to enforce world peace.

In a signed editorial in the November issue of the American Federationist, official organ of the AFL, Mr. Green made it clear that labor wants Congress to take a strong stand on this issue. He said:

"Experience shows that the use of police power is an essential condition to maintenance of order in any geographic division. This is equally true of international order.

"There is practically no disagreement on objectives. The next step is to get agreement on how to implement these objectives. Mutual confidence and good faith help toward decisions that will mean freedom for all peoples. While we cannot escape the consequences of the mistakes of the past, nor the outbreak of civil war when arbitrary rule is broken, we can raise the torch of freedom which alone can light the way to higher levels of living.

"What is now desperately needed is to clarify international planning is a clear, forthright statement of national foreign policy by the Congress of the United States. That basic statement need be only a formal statement of the responsibility our nation feels for doing its part in maintaining peace between nations, with justice to all, and that to this end we must participate in the development of agencies necessary to maintain justice. The task ahead is so stupendous and fateful that we might hesitate if we did not know destruction of our civilization by war is the only alternative.

"We look to Congress for wise deliberation and speedy action, thus typifying the cooperation of all parties and branches of the government for the good of all, and that in this basic policy will then be the guiding control of all our international conferences and relations.

"Congress is our policy-making agency and has this responsibility for leadership."

Knox Praises "Superb" AFL Help In Building Great Navy Fleets

Washington, D. C.—Praising the "superb efforts" of American labor on the production front, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox expressed appreciation to AFL President William Green for the latter's Navy Day pledge of cooperation with the nation's fighting fleets. Secretary Knox said in part:

"In the twelve-month span since the observance of last Navy Day, the United States Navy has expanded into the most powerful instrument of fighting ships the world has ever seen. Today, in every ocean, we are striking heavily against the enemy, carrying the war to his own shores. The watchword is ATTACK. It shall bring us to total, smashing victory over the tyrants who have assailed us.

"The record which has been made on the battle front would not have been possible without American labor's superb efforts on the production front. You have helped to give us the ships and planes and guns and ammunition with which to fight. They have been provided in ever-increasing quantities, and you will continue to do so as the demands this war shall require.

"The accomplishments of the past are the promise of the future. Labor together with management will produce the equipment. The Navy will fight it. The enemy will be destroyed."

His latest message to the following message from Mr. Green:

"On this Navy Day, the 6,500,000 members of the American Federation of Labor take off their hats to the men and women of the Navy who have shown such magnificent courage, skill and initiative in the prosecution of difficult administrative assignments. We share your pride in the great fighting fleets under your command because we built them and we know they are superior to any others in the world.

"Together American labor and America's Navy personnel constitute an unbeatable team. We are the producing half of the team and you are the fighting half.

"Today the Navy requires more than ships alone. Vast quantities of planes, guns, bombs and ammunition are being made by our workers for the Navy. We are providing them and we will continue to do so ahead of schedule to hasten victory. We know that the men of the Navy will hold up the fighting end and we are proud of the fact that many thousands of our own members are now serving on Navy ships and planes and in the Seabees.

"To the men of the fleet scratching out the enemy on the seven seas we send this heartfelt message on Navy Day: 'You're doing a great job and we of the American Federation of Labor will back you up to the limit!'"

AFL WINS PLANT POLLS IN MOLINE AND DAVENPORT

Washington, D. C. — A National Labor Relations Board election at the plant of the Stromberg-Bezler Co., Moline, Ill., to choose a collective bargaining representative recorded 66 votes for the AFL to 17 against, and the NLRB election at the Bessler Locomotive Corp. plant, Davenport, Iowa, resulted in 187 votes for the AFL Machinists Association to 56 against, according to the report of Organizer John Schreier to AFL President William Green. Mr. Schreier said the moldcrew and the blacksmiths in the Bessler plant were already organized and that the addition of the machinists made the plant 100 per cent AFL.

GENERAL STRONG WARNS AGAINST WAR OPTIMISM

Fort Knox, Ky.—Optimism based on relatively minor victories over the Axis is dangerous to the continued success of our war efforts, Maj. Gen. George V. Strong, chief of the Army's intelligence service, warned 600 labor and industry leaders from 31 mid-western states at a War Department conference here.

Undersecretary of War Patterson said labor and industry had done "a magnificent job" so far in the war, but that the most difficult task still lies ahead.

Roosevelt Seizes Coal Mines; Railroad Labor Crisis Grows

Ask Congress To O. K. Rail Pay Hike

Washington, D. C.—A joint resolution putting Congress on record as approving an increase of eight cents an hour in the pay of more than a million non-operating railroad employes was introduced by Senator Truman of Missouri.

Meanwhile, George M. Harrison, President of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks, announced he will take the fight of these railroad workers for a fair final directly to the public in an appeal to be broadcast over the AFL "Labor For Victory" program on Sunday, Nov. 14 at 1:15 P.M., E.W.T.

While the railroad employes are now engaged in taking a nation-wide strike vote, their union officials emphasized that a strike is the last thing the loyal railroad workers of the country want.

The pay of the non-operating railway workers is now on the average 21 cents an hour less than that of workers in other industries doing similar jobs.

More than a year ago the railway workers asked for a 20 cents an hour wage increase. The dispute, under the provisions of the Railway Labor Act, was referred by President Roosevelt to a special commission which recommended an 8 cents an hour increase and held that this adjustment would not be inflationary.

President Roosevelt then appealed to the union leaders to accept this award, which they finally did with some reluctance on the assurance that an effort also would be made to start overtime pay for railway workers after 40 hours a week, instead of 48 hours as at present.

Then, with startling suddenness came an announcement from Economic Stabilization Director Vinson that he had vetoed the 8 cents an hour increase.

This shocking action caused railroad workers to wonder about "who is President of the United States." Unable to reverse the decree, they finally decided to take a strike vote which is calculated to demonstrate to the nation how the railroad workers feel about the unjust way they have been treated.

Plane Production Hits New High With Total of 8,200 In October

Washington, D. C.—Aircraft production in October exceeded all expectations and broke all previous records when it passed the 8,200 mark, the War Production Board revealed.

The new mark was all the more encouraging because September production of planes was only 7,598—fourteen less than August.

The big October gain once more placed the plane program within striking distance of the 8,500 planes a month goal.

Heavy bomber production was reported "excellent" and officials said sharp improvements were made in all categories and in all areas. Particular praise was expressed for the output achieved in West Coast plants which are manned for the most part by women.

FDR Opens New Fight For Subsidies; Urges Action To Cut Living Costs

Washington, D. C. — President Roosevelt, in a fighting message to a rebellious Congress, stoutly defended the subsidy principle and left little doubt that he would veto any bill which sought to prevent use of them.

The President apparently aimed much of his 10,000-word message at the pending bill to extend the life of the Commodity Credit Corporation beyond Dec. 31. This bill, as it was reported from the House Banking and Currency Committee, would prohibit after Dec. 31 the paying of subsidies on foods, feeds and fibers. President vetoed an anti-subsidy bill last summer and the House upheld him.

Mr. Roosevelt said the support price program for farmers, coupled with subsidy programs "to meet specific farming costs which raising prices to consumers, is an essential part of winning the war."

"The subsidies that are used," he said, "cannot properly be called price subsidies or consumer subsidies. They are war subsidies. The costs which they cover are war costs."

Food subsidies in 1943, the message said, would cost about $800,000,000, but their use "has saved the taxpayers of this country," and indicated that no further concentration of food authority in the War Food Administration was intended by saying that it already was properly centered in one agency.

The President acknowledged the existence of black markets and said vigorous efforts would be made to stamp them out, but he insisted that the "price support program is proving reasonably successful on both counts: increasing production and maintaining fair food prices for the consumer."

"I am convinced," he said, "that to abandon our present policy would increase the cost of living, bring about inflation and cause hardship which would then be justifiable, and might well start a serious and dangerous cycle of inflation—without any real profit to anyone.

"Some people say 'a little inflation will not hurt anyone.' They are like the man who takes the first shot of opium for the sensations he thinks it will give him. He likes it, although he swears that he will not make it a habit. Then he tries two—and then more, and more—and then he loses all control of himself."

Speaker Rayburn said that the Commodity Credit Corporation bill probably would not be taken up by the House until after Armistice Day.

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President Acts When Miners Strike Against WLB Decision

Washington, D. C. — President Roosevelt ordered Secretary of the Interior Ickes to seize possession of the nation's coal mines for the second time this year at threats of a country-wide strike by the United Mine Workers Union reached a climax.

The President called upon every miner "to return to work without a day's delay" while U. M. W. officials pondered what action they would take on War Labor Board decision in the Illinois field which was unsatisfactory to the miners.

The American Federation of Labor members on the War Labor Board dissented from the majority decision in a sharply worded decision which charged that the ruling had been dictated by Economic Stabilization Director Vinson and War Mobilization Director Byrnes.

"Coal must be mined," the President declared in his official order. "The enemy does not wait."

The President acted under the Connally-Smith War Labor Disputes Act which provides harsh penalties for workers who refuse to go to work on properties seized by the Government.

It was believed that despite their resentment over the delays and the terms in official order, miners and their wage demands the mines would return to work peacefully pending still further efforts to reach agreement on a new contract.

The Illinois case hinged on an agreement entered into between the mine operators and the union in that State. Oct. 1 was regarded as a test case since for the first time it included a provision with regard to portal-to-portal pay satisfactory to the union.

In terms of dollars and cents, the agreement meant that instead of earning $7 a day for seven hours a day, the miners would get $8.50 a day for an eight and a half hour day.

The War Labor Board awarded an $8.12½ daily wage for an eight and a half hour day but left the portal-to-portal pay issue still up in the air.

The opinion of the AFL members on the WLB said, in part:

"It is our considered judgment that the miners should receive $8.50 a day for each straight time hour they worked. For the work week of 40 hours at straight time and 11 hours at time and a half, the total takehome should be $56.50.

"The inability of both divisions of the majority to concede that travel time is productive time that should be paid for in full-whenever it is worked, contravenes the principle that pay is due for all time worked.

"This decision of the majority adds another to the list of decisions which have not been determined on the basis of merit, but rather by the attitude of the individuals and government agencies who dominate the decisions of the public members of the Board."

EASTERN LABOR PRESS OFFERS MERIT AWARDS

Boston—Classifications for various awards to be bestowed upon labor publications for exceptional excellence during 1943 were decided upon by the executive council of the Eastern Labor Press conference at a meeting here.

The contest will be based on the following classifications:

1. International union publications. (A) Editorial excellence, (B) Typographical appearance.

2. Weekly labor papers. (A) Editorial excellence, (B) Typographical appearance.

3. Monthly labor papers. (A) Editorial excellence, (B) Typographical appearance.

4. Best single editorial.

5. Best original cartoon.

6. Best original display.

For the above classifications three awards are to be made: First, second and third.

Each participating publication may submit no more than three issues which have been published between July 1, 1943, and March 1, 1944. All entries must be submitted to the awards committee not later than March 15, 1944. The winning publications will be exhibited at the annual convention of the Eastern Labor Press and awards made at annual banquet. An entrance fee of $1 must be paid for each publication entered in competition for the awards.

AFL MEN FINISH 500TH LIBERTY SHIP ENGINE

Sunnyvale, Calif.—To mark completion of their 500th engine for Liberty ships, AFL workers at Joshua Hendy Iron Works here were greeted by Admiral E. S. Land, Chairman of the Maritime Commission, for a job splendidly done.

In an accounting of performance of Hendy engines as demonstrated in sea trials, Admiral Land said that chief engineer of the S. S. Benjamin Franklin, launched Nov. 11, 1942, at Oakland, reported 311 per cent estimated efficiency engine performance on a 10,000-mile voyage to the South Seas. The chief engineer of the S. S. William Cushing, launched Oct. 7, 1942, at Richmond Shipyard No. 1, rated engine efficiency 110 per cent on a 30,000-mile trip in convoy to North Africa.